

## Foreword

Our primary purpose is to protect the public, but as we do so we want to lead with kindness and compassion.

By focusing our attention on supporting our registrants, we hope to build trust in our processes, increase stakeholder engagement and understanding, and continue to deliver our regulatory objectives.

We know regulatory processes are challenging for all those involved, particularly our fitness to practise processes. We are working hard behind the scenes to ensure that regulatory reform supports us to regulate in a way that puts people at the heart of everything we do. That said, we know there is more we can do within our current legislative framework to support, guide and assist our registrants; shifting the focus as far as possible from adversarial interactions to supportive ones that help to build professionalism.

In July of this year, the School of Health Sciences at Surrey University, led by Professor Jill Maben, reported on the research we commissioned them to undertake on the registrant experience of fitness to practise<sup>1</sup>. This provides us with rich data that, along with other intelligence we have gathered, has informed our Registrant Health and Wellbeing strategy and accompanying action plan. Whilst the focus of this research was on our fitness to practise function, we know that the issues highlighted in the research report extend across all our regulatory functions.

Our intention is that this strategy, and the action plan that supports it, help us embed a more human approach to regulation across the HCPC.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/meetings-attachments3/council-meeting/2020/04.-28.07.2020/enc-09---experiences-of-the-fitness-to-practise-process--research-report.pdf>

## Summary

### Vision

We exhibit empathy in all our interactions, demonstrate fairness in all that we do, and cultivate professionalism through a supportive, transparent and collaborative approach.

### Strategic aims

We will achieve our vision by taking forward seven strategic aims:

1. Taking a person centred approach to our customer service which accounts for context and demonstrates empathy and understanding.
2. Leading with fairness and advocating equality, diversity and inclusion.
3. Listening, learning and acting on intelligence, and communicating well.
4. Enacting processes in a timely way; giving regular updates and responses.
5. Delivering clear, open and transparent processes and decisions.
6. Actively engaging with stakeholders to ensure the right action at the right time.
7. Increasing focus on fostering professionalism.

### What success will look like

Success will deliver the following outcomes:

- We provide good customer service and deliver timely, empathetic communications.
- We reach fair, transparent and proportionate decisions which take account of context.
- We are approachable and engaged with registrants and their employers.
- We will see an improvement in perceptions of the HCPC and our processes from registrants and other key stakeholders, through stakeholder polling, complaints and feedback, FTP registrant feedback forms and future research.
- Stakeholders see us act on their feedback and the wider learning we achieve through further insights and intelligence gathering.
- The promotion of professionalism is evidenced in all that we do.

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## About the HCPC

### Our purpose

To uphold the highest standards in the professions we regulate so that we protect the public and inspire their confidence

### Our vision

To be the UK's foremost healthcare multi-profession regulator

### Our values

- **Fair** – being open, honest and transparent.
- **Compassionate** – treating people with respect, empathy and care.
- **Inclusive** – collaborating with others and valuing diversity.
- **Enterprising** – being resourceful and creative, seeking opportunities to innovate and drive efficiency.

## What our intelligence tells us

We gather intelligence across our regulatory functions by undertaking internal research, commissioning external research, analysing corporate complaints, collating general feedback and enquiries, and considering the findings and recommendations from public inquiries.

The themes arising from this intelligence in relation to registrant health and wellbeing, and in particular the impact our processes can have in this regard are consistent. These are:

- **increasing pressures in the workplace** both in demand and expectations increases stress and the prevalence of mental health issues amongst healthcare professionals, this creates a risk to service users;
- **doing more with less** leads to mistakes and risks to service users;
- **registrants are fearful of their regulator**, adding to their stress;
- **there is confusion about the role of the regulator** and when our fitness to practise processes should be engaged;
- **our communication has a big impact** and there is scope for improvement in our approach;
- **we need to engage more with our stakeholders** to support their understanding and improve what we do;

- **there is more we can do to be a transparent organisation**, through clarity and openness;
- **our processes need to be more efficient**, we need to reduce the time those processes take and take greater account of the needs of our stakeholders; and
- **we need to increase our support offer** and use our voice to encourage others to do the same.

## Strategic aims

We have set seven strategic aims that will also us to achieve our vision:

We exhibit empathy in all our interactions, demonstrate fairness in all that we do, and cultivate professionalism through a supportive, transparent and collaborative approach.

Each strategic aim establishes where we are now, our objective, what we will do and where we expect to be.

### **Strategic aim one: Taking a person centred approach to our customer service which accounts for context and demonstrates empathy and understanding.**

#### *Where we are now*

We gather intelligence from a number of sources, as set out above, which tell us that some registrants have negative experiences of engagement with us, or know someone else who has had a negative experience of engagement with us. Whilst we strive for, and largely succeed in, providing good customer service, we recognise that any bad experience is one too many.

#### *Objective*

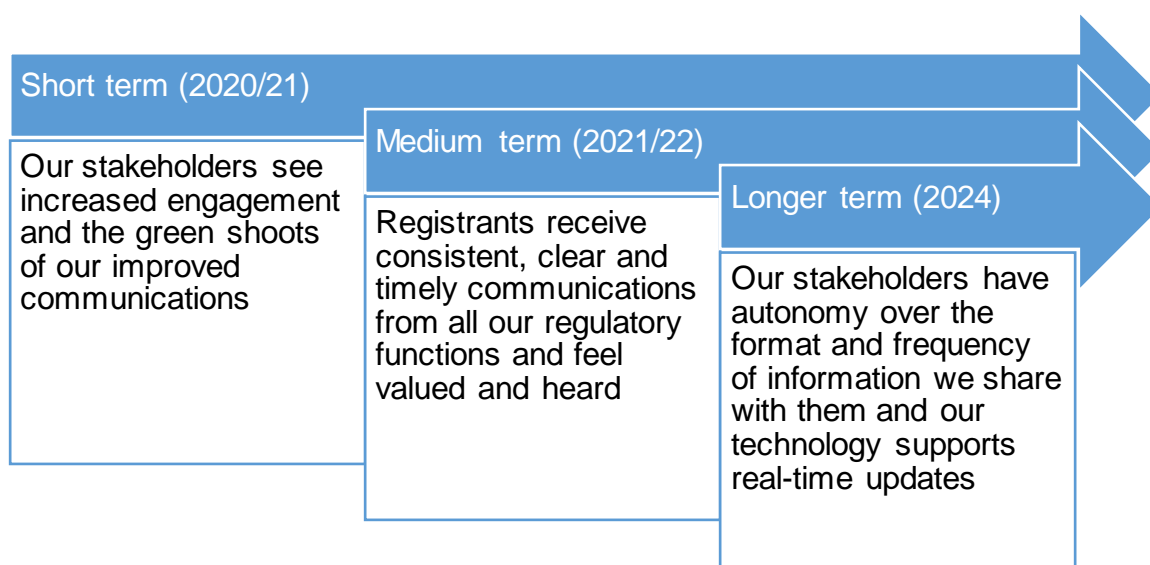
To ensure every interaction a registrant has with the HCPC takes account of their circumstances, and demonstrates compassion and professionalism.

#### *What we will do*

- Establish consistent points of contact to ensure stakeholders can have effective and timely interactions with us, and feel valued and supported.
- Facilitate preferred means of communication wherever possible to provide the best customer experience and be inclusive.
- Facilitate the registrant's voice throughout the process to help with the sharing of information, speed processes up and reduce stress.

- Use advancements in our systems to support our stakeholders in keeping up to date with the progress of applications, complaints, cases and enquiries.

*What we expect to see*



**Strategic aim two: Leading with fairness and advocating equality, diversity and inclusion**

*Where we are now*

The pressures on our registrants in the workplace now exceeds anything past registrants have faced. Workforce shortages, increased demand, and higher service user expectations are a few of contributory factors. Additional pressures on healthcare professionals can lead to mistakes, and mistakes can lead to harm.

We know that some of our processes add to those pressures and we’ve taken steps to reduce negative impacts. There is more to be done though, particularly in relation to our understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion issues and the actions we take as a result.

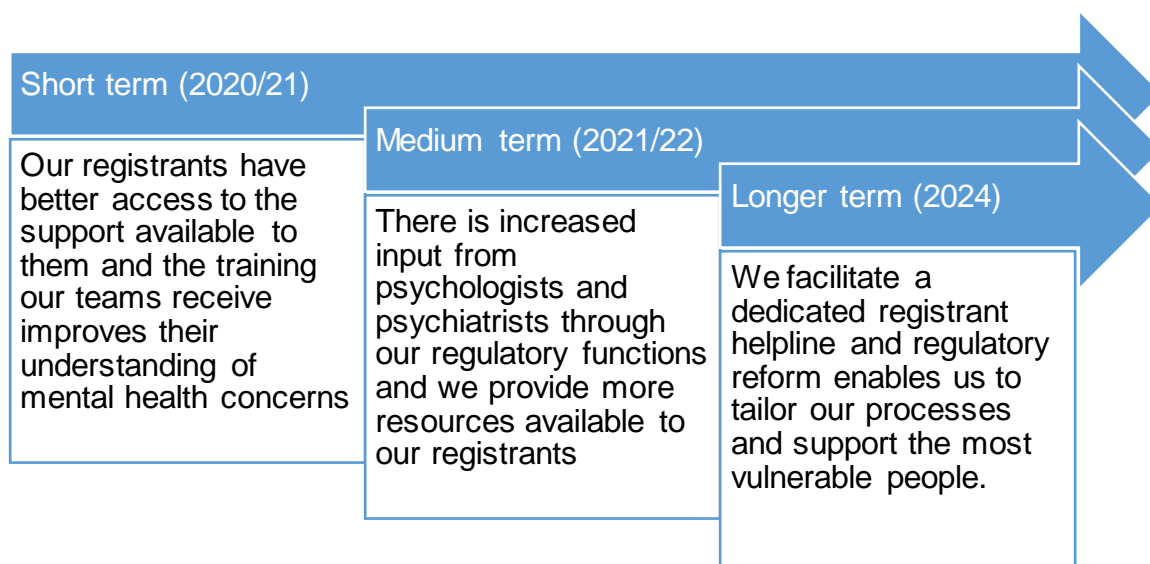
*Objective*

We want to reduce the risk of harm by improving our support offer, and showing a fair and compassionate approach.

*What we will do*

- Influence stakeholders to improve registrant’s access to mental health support so our registrants receive the same support available now for doctors.
- Better signposting to sources of support and advice across our regulatory functions to give registrants a single source of information, whatever their needs are.
- Establish a registrant helpline to give individual, confidential advice.
- Developing specific team capabilities to manage vulnerable registrant cases
- Collect and use our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data across our Regulatory functions and systems, to analyse impacts from our processes on protected groups, so we can take action to address these impacts.

*What we expect to see by 2024*



**Strategic aim three: Listening, learning and acting on intelligence and communicating well**

*Where we are now*

We have commissioned research, held stakeholder events, and analysed the feedback we receive. We have learned and have taken steps to address the issues that have been raised with us, but there is more that we should do.

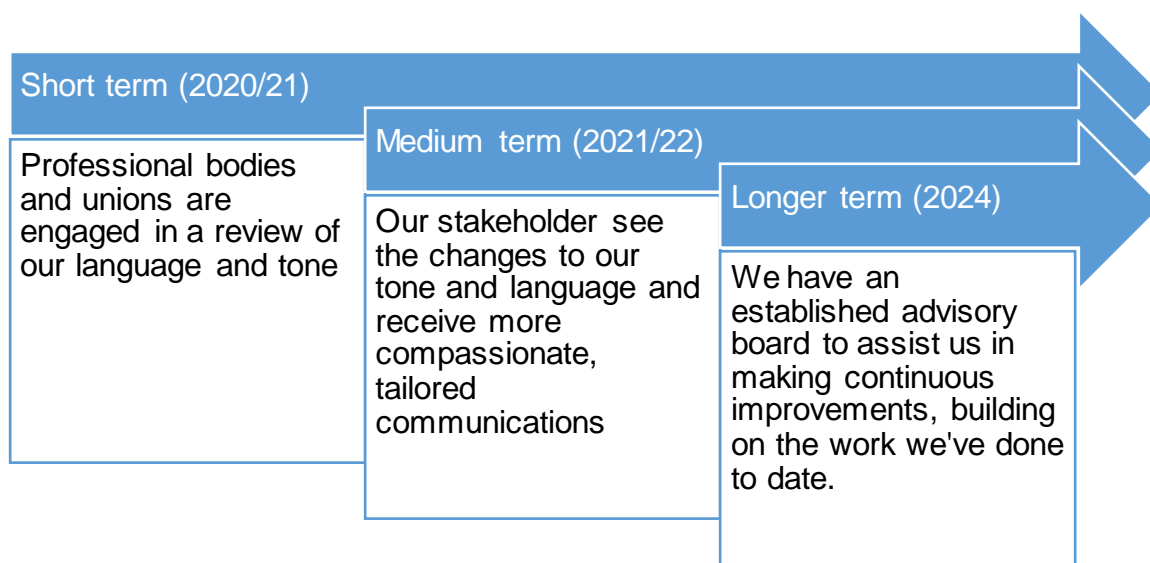
*Objective*

We want to significantly increase the engagement we have with all our stakeholders, and work with them to address concerns and issues. We hope to deliver improvements in our communication so that everyone we engage with feels valued and heard and sees HCPC as an organisation which acts upon feedback and the wider learning we achieve through further insights and intelligence gathering.

*What we will do*

- Undertake a review of our tone of voice to improve how we communicate, making it more human, accessible and compassionate. We will also place a greater emphasis on personalised communications, tailored to the individual and their needs.
- Review the size of documents we send to stakeholders, in particular bundles of information sent out during an investigation, to ensure it is clear and accessible, and doesn't overwhelm the recipient.
- Development of an Advisory Board to support further improvements across all that we do.

*What we expect to see*



## **Strategic aim four: Enacting processes in a timely way, giving regular updates and responses**

### *Where we are now*

We accept our processes are too lengthy and often cause stress and anxiety for our registrants. We know the frequency of some of our communications could be improved, and our response times can be slow. We've made really good progress over recent months in relation to our approach to corporate complaints and we want to emulate this throughout our organisation.

### *Objective*

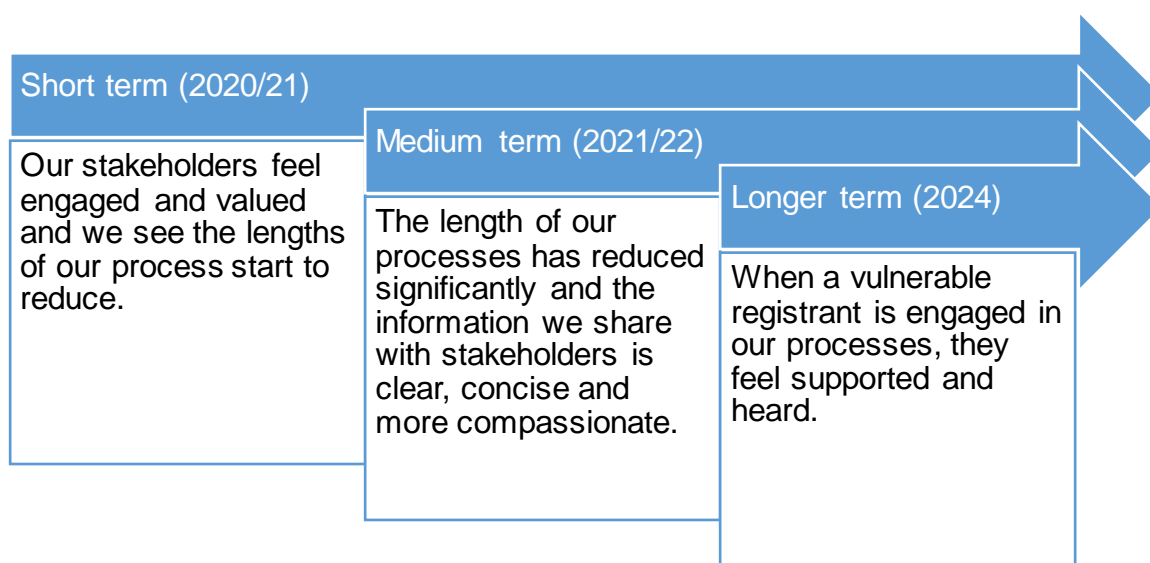
To reduce the length of our processes. Where we are reliant on external information and that is delayed, we keep our stakeholders updated. When people get in touch with us, we prioritise a clear, swift response.

### *What we will do*

- Reduce length of time cases take to progress through FTP to reduce stress and costs for all.
- Make processes less adversarial and more engaging.
- Tailor processes when a registrant is particularly unwell.

### *What we expect to see*





## **Strategic aim five: Delivering clear, open and transparent processes and decisions**

### *Where we are now*

Whilst we provide guidance, tools and information across our functions, some stakeholders struggle to navigate our processes and understand our decisions.

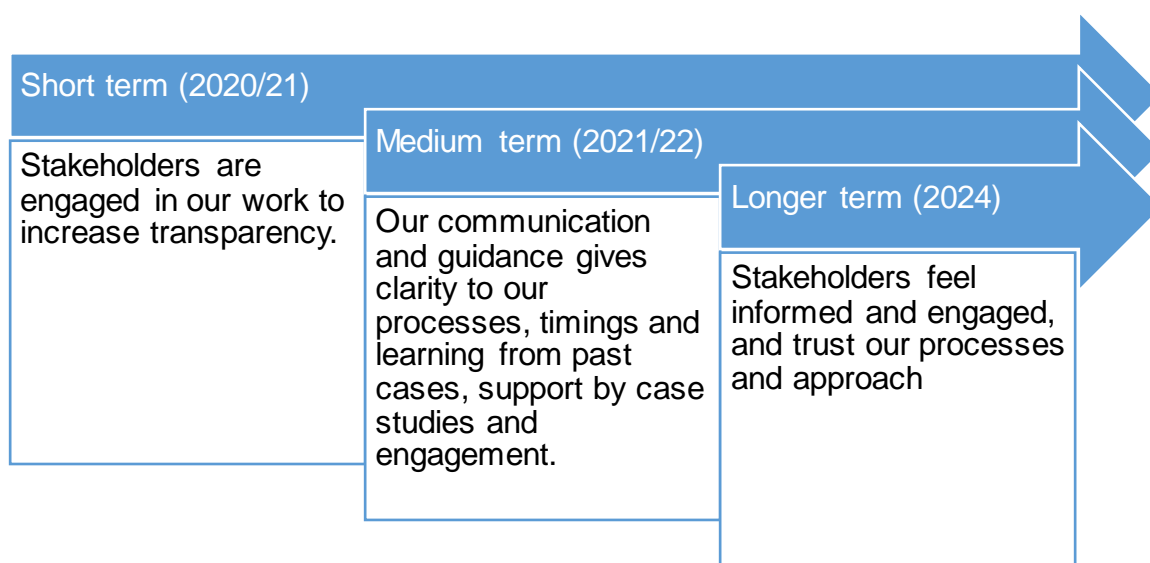
### *Objective*

We want all those who engage our regulatory processes to understand the steps we will take, be given realistic timescales, and understand the likely outcomes.

### *What we will do*

- Ensure we are open about how we handle / use information in our regulatory processes shared to facilitate understanding and assist learning.
- Share learning from past FTP cases with registrants so they know what to expect and don't worry unnecessarily about being removed from practice.
- Ensure we are open and honest about timings of our regulatory processes to reduce the stress on registrants.
- Greater transparency regarding decisions across our regulatory functions to facilitate understanding and assist learning.

### *What we expect to see*



**Strategic aim six: Actively engaging with stakeholders to ensure the right action at the right time**

*Where we are now*

Most stakeholders understand our remit and approach, but some don't. This means that we might not receive the right type or volume of referrals and is exacerbated by myths attached to some of our processes, which reduces the level of engagement we see from registrants. Engagement which would often serve to expedite matters in a way which takes account of all information.

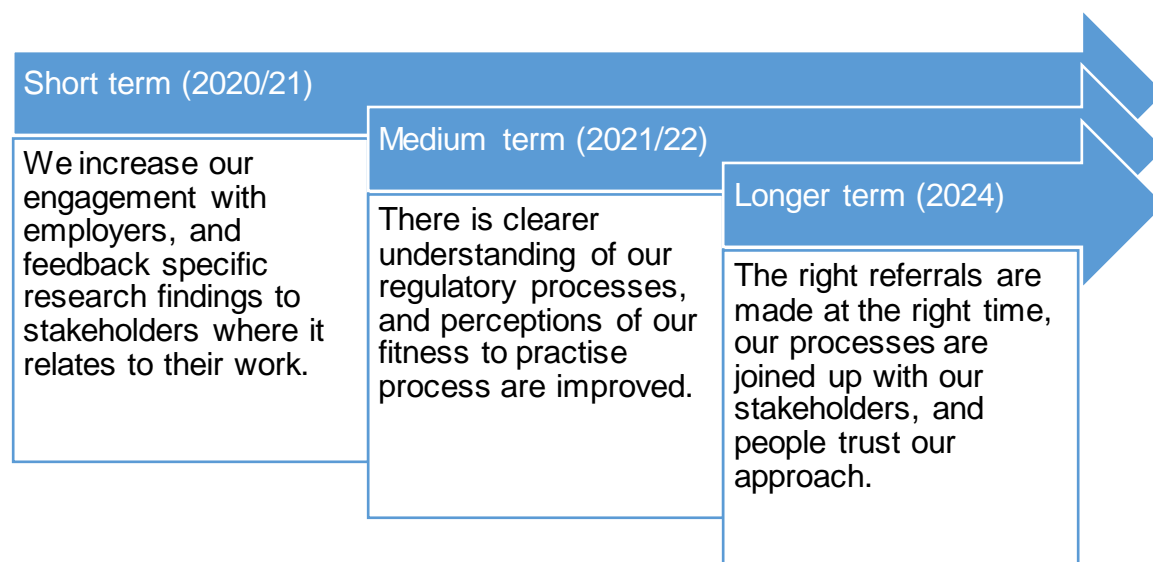
*Objective*

To bust the myths around our processes and educate our stakeholders about our processes, and when to engage them, for the benefit of our registrants and ultimately service user safety.

*What we will do*

- Improve our stakeholder's understanding of our policies and processes, with a particular focus on FTP.
- Improve perceptions of FTP to reduce stress and increase beneficial engagement.
- Employer engagement to educate about referrals and ensure consistency.
- Share feedback from research with stakeholders; both in relation to the work of the HCPC but also their own processes.

*What we expect to see*



**Strategic aim seven: Increasing focus on fostering professionalism**

*Where we are now*

We have clear and accessible guidance to support the more challenging areas of practice, such as confidentiality. However, as our professions' scopes of practice and medicine entitlements develop there is much more we could do through formal and informal guidance and tools. Where concerns are raised through FTP there are gaps in the support offered to harness learning.

*Objective*

To improve the offer of guidance, support and information on our website, and to consider ways in which we can focus on harnessing the findings of FTP investigations to support greater learning for individual registrants and the wider registrant population.

*What we will do*

- Create guidance on specific elements of our processes to better support registrants.
- Explore possible Peer Support Scheme (initially for FTP) to ensure registrants access learning through our processes.

- Support learning and professionalism through hubs, information sheets and toolkits.
- Explore mechanisms to support unrepresented registrants.

*What we expect to see*

